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ABSTRACT

Described in this report are factors which affect and/or limit urban educational research and dimensions of cities which should be considered in making social and organizational research in urban education more relevant. Some of these considerations are learning, institutional and management deficits, the lack of a total systems perspective on the part of most urban education researchers, and the insufficient allocation of resources to education, to schools, and to the students. The concept of urbanism is reviewed and dimensions which characterize a complex urban system are proposed. These include population changes, migration, segmented urban markets for housing, labor and social services, and social and economic segregation, among others. Also described are ten dimensions of urban schools which represent the internal makeup of an urban educational system. These include language problems, cultural factors, principals' roles, resources, parental support, institutional linkages, and employment opportunities. A basic approach for urban educational research is suggested and implications for future research are discussed. (EB)

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AN INITIAL FORMULATION

Research, Diagnosis and Development in Urban Education

by

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I. INTRODUCTION

The recent appointment of Robert C. Wood, retiring President of the University of Massachusetts, to the Superintendency of the Boston School System, is a symbol of the rediscovery of urban schools as a critical factor in urban redevelopment. Both the energy problem and the housing needs of the Baby Boom population are market forces which have emerged in the last several years to invigorate the demand for urban housing. It is said by some that better housing will bring people back to the city but it will be the schools which keep them there. The performance of the urban schools will be the bottom line of urban redevelopment. At the time of his appointment, Dr. Wood, one of the original "urbanists" and director of the Joint Center for Urban Studies at MIT/Harvard, echoed these concerns and indicated that he wanted to bring the skills of the urban sciences to the problems of the schools of Boston.

There are different perspectives on how those prcblems of the urban schools should be characterized. There are those who have indicated that the problem is primarily a learning problem of disadvantaged students. These students are said to have certain language and experiential deficits associated with poverty and other socio-economic distress conditions. A second perspective focuses on the inadequacy of the instructional system. These instructional deficits are either attributed to the pre-service and in-service experiences of the urban teacher, or to the lack of adequate and appropriate curriculum materials.

A third perspective is concerned with the general inadequacy of the fiscal resources to support urban education. As the studies on municipal overburden indicate, the cost of doing the public's business in cities is dramatically higher. Budgets for urban districts must make additional provision for security, counseling, nutrition, absenteeism, health, and other non-instructional concerns. In addition, the capitol funds for building renovation and new construction have not, in many cases, been forthcoming. In New Jersey, for instance, 40 percent of the urban schools in that state were built before 1914.

A fourth characterization of the problem of urban education is concerned with what might be called the management deficit of urban districts. Given the size (number of schools), complexity (diverse population), and social-economic stress (unemployment, health problems) of urban districts, many districts are effectively under managed by the traditional provisions of educational administration. A further aspect of the management deficit might be characterized by a deficit of political rationality in at least some urban districts. Certainly the legal mandate of desegregation has partially contributed to this condition.

These overlapping characterizations of the problems of urban schools are not necessarily in conflict. Taken together they describe the complex reality of the urban education systems. What may be in conflict are the potential developmental treatments which might flow from the diagnosis associated with each of these characterizations. Different professional orientations will argue for the primacy of one micro treatment

over another as the most effective or necessary way to change aspects of the macro reality.

At this point it might be useful to introduce the medical metaphor recently utilized by George Will.

Will (Newsweek, August 7, 1978)argues that most of the major improvements in the health of Americans in the 20th Century have been derived from changes in social behavior or environmental conditions. It has been increased improvements in sanitation which has reduced infant mortality as well as deaths from typhoid fever. Conversely it has been behavior associated with automobiles which have increased deaths and causalities from accidents. Likewise increases in smoking and the eating of meat have led to the increases in cancers. Will argues that the "treatments" of modern hospital care and medical technologies contribute significant but only minor improvements in overall health care. These "micro" treatments can contribute only marginally to improvements in the macro reality. Is this medical/health care metaphor transferable to public education?

The bias of this paper is towards a systems perspective. The classroom system exists within a school/community system which exists within a broader district/city system within a regional/state/national system. Micro or incremental treatments at either the classroom level or elsewhere at different levels may provide important but minor changes and improvements. The search for a classroom penicillin may lead to a reduction of certain learning infections but improvements in the overall

instructional environment of a community may contribute more to the education/health of the school population.

The difficulty with any systems perspective is that each social science discipline has adopted the techniques of systems research in different ways. At the same time the various disciplines and professions associated with the social sciences have no integrated methodological system. The use by Arthur Wise and others of a social science construct as the basis for critiquing educational research is an artificial exercise. There is no social science; instead there are numerous and diverse scientific procedures for researching social phenomena.

If we are to proceed with the study of urban education, strategies for social and organizational research must be formulated or restated. Tactics for classroom research should flow from a broader concern or strategy for research on complex urban systems. Another bias of this paper is with the social economy of cities (Gappert, 1975). The allocation of resources to education, to schools, to the classroom and to the individual student is viewed as a central issue. The scarcest resource to be allocated is time - professional time for instruction and educational management, and student time for learning and studying. How does a community allocate its time and other resources to educational tasks and facilities and materials? The system of allocations occur with a broad social context. The central concern of resource allocation within that context comprises the social economy of urban education.

II. URBANISM AND DIMENSIONS OF URBAN SYSTEM

In this section we want to review the concept of urbanism and propose some dimensions to characterize complex urban system.

Louis Wirth formulated the concept of urbanism around the notions of size, density, and heterogeneity. A more appropriate contemporary conception of urbanism, featuring relationships expressing underlying socio-economic realities, should probably include the dimensions of (1) urban population changes, (2) segmented markets, (3) the poverty and progress paradox, (4) the organization and distribution of lifestyles, (5) the problems of community or group identification, (6) the manifestations of racial conflict and cultural aversions, (7) the range of intermediate institutions and organizations, (8) innovation and diffusion, (9) the changing nature and value of centrality, and (10) the evolving uses of urban structural forms. These dimensions are treated below.

Urban population changes and the dynamic forces behind those changes are perhaps the chief manifestations of the social economic conditions of the city. The population changes reflect the push-and-pull forces of migration between and within cities. The attention of the last three decades has focused primarily upon the rural to urban population dynamic. As Niles Hansen demonstrated in Rural Poverty and the Urban Crisis (1970), these movements can be best understood within a framework of regional development, economic motivations, and social needs.

In the years ahead the analysis of intra- and interurban population movements will be of greater importance. As Morrison (1974) has demonstrated in his studies for The Rand Corporation, intrametropolitan movements within cities like St. Louis and Seattle, strongly influenced by federal procurement policies, represent the changing but chronic urban condition.

Schools are especially impacted by the changing demography of cities. The influx of new immigrant populations especially the Hispanic ones have continued the tradition of the cities as entry points into American society. Besides their problems of adapting and developing programs for these new language groups, urban schools also face the pervasive problem of student transience caused by instability in urban housing conditions.

Associated with these population changes is the development and evolution of segmented urban markets for housing, labor, social services, and so forth. Earlier views of the homogeneous nature of urban economic processes have given way to more detailed analysis on the segmented nature of the supply and demand forces operating within the urban region. This is especially true of the several markets for labor which seem to exist. Both the notion and analysis of a dual labor market (Reich, Gordon and Edwards, 1973) and of an internal labor market (Piore and Doeringer, 1971) provide a much more realistic perspective on the development of urban policy.

The neighborhoods of a city often reflect this segmentation. The segmentation of fundamental urban activity patterns reflect tendencies towards a "natural" organization of the highly diverse nature of urban life. This is one reason why urban schools within a single city may vary tremendously in both their operating context and in the quality of their efforts.

Similar concepts of segmentation in other markets are perhaps important in understanding the poverty and progress paradox. Urbanists since the time of Henry George have struggled to understand the persistence of economic instability and deprivation alongside the growth of wealth and affluence. It may well be that the lower class so deplored (but accepted) by Edward Banfield and the so-called "culture of poverty" identified by Oscar Lewis are really best viewed as social adaptations to the structure of economic inequality which is so endemic to urban growth.

Urban schools are viewed by some as operating in an economic class and social caste environment which is outside of the American mainstream. But others argue that economic deprivation and inequality are integral to that mainstream and that urban schools have always served as filtering devices to it.

One of the significant spatial manifestations of the persistence of economic inequality in cities is the evolving distribution of lifestyles governed by socioeconomic circumstances. From Dorcester in Boston to River Hills in Milwaukee to the new town of Flower

Mound in Texas, the self-selecting forces of social and economic segregation are strong, persistent, and resistant to planned change.

It may be, as David Harvey (1973) points out, that as the forces of urbanization create a more homogenous nation, the demands of lifestyle and workstyle affinity groups reestablish within the city "regional" differences. Insofar as the urbanization of the countryside has created an interrelated network of economically effective space, people attempt by all manner of social means to differentiate what the marketplace has in fact rendered homogenous. As Harvey writes: "Hence the urban space economy is replete with all manner of pseudo-hierarchical spatial orderings to reflect prestige and status in residential locations. These orderings are very important to the self-respect of people."

Out of this "created space" may come the forces of social redistribution and reciprocity. These forces are perhaps the significant forms of behavior which along with communication and the ordering of behavior make up a sense of community (Minar and Greer, 1969). The struggle to find or to recreate a sense of community within the competitive nexus of the urban markets remains contested throughout contemporary metropolitan America. The "privatism" of the early industrial city continues and has redefined itself in suburbia as Packard (1972) and Slater (1970) have pointed out.

It is not necessary to define the social purpose of community-seeking behavior within the spatial boundaries of the traditional

urban neighborhood. This concept perhaps is more of a theoretical construct than a social reality. But the notion of neighborhood is being resurrected, either through the imperative of political decentralization (Kotler, 1969) or through the economic value of "neighborly behavior" (Keller, 1968).

The rediscovery of the value of community schools, of community education, and similar efforts to build parental involvement and support for instructional needs and goals is a reflection of the periodic need to rebuild a sense of community within the confines of the city.

But the sense of community which seemingly has a socioeconomic logic is often torn apart by the acceleration of racial conflict and cultural aversion. On the one hand these emotional forces with their complex psychological roots tend to reinforce socioeconomic segregation tendencies. The social stress engendered by economic competition, instability, and the frailty of social cohesion in a changing city is exacerbated by these forces. But on the other hand it is unclear whether the further evolution of cities can be directed so as to ameliorate these tensions. Halpern (1969), in defining racism as a symptom of incoherence between individuals and social groupings, suggests that the tension management of other kinds of relationships must be sought so as to achieve new, transformed relationships between members of different groups. This is perhaps why desegregation efforts which are limited only to schools create such conflicts.

The broader economic and political forces must be harnessed to promote and support new patterns of cultural and social integration or cohesion as the urban population changes.

Behind the myth of the partially integrated, partially pluralistic city lies the need for a concept of metropolitan citizenship which is illusive and visionary. Perhaps the preoccupation of political science with issues of metropolitan functions and structures has obscured the need to understand the historical and cultural forces present within the political process. More important to the understanding of the further evolution of the social economy of cities is the need to perceive the range of intermediate institutions and organizations which operate within the urban region. These intermediate institutions operating at the level of the urban scale are the single most important interface between the local citizen and the national society. In spite of the dominance of the national corporate economy and the preeminence of a televised culture, it is the institutions which are operative within the 243 SMSAs that chiefly influence the pace and style of life for most Americans.

With the advent of the several forms of revenue sharing, localism in the range of urban institutions has been reinforced, if not reestablished. A more systematic analysis of the structure of local institutions is required. Warren's notion of the interorganization field in his recent The Structure of Community Reform

(1974) is an important new construct by which interaction, coordination, innovation, and responsiveness within urban institutions can be analyzed. As Williamson (1973) has pointed out, the development of nonmarket forms of economic organization occurs whenever economic markets, attempting to complete a set of transactions, experience social or political frictions. In one sense urban institutions of many kinds arise from a social reaction to the workings and failures of economic markets. But at the same time, institutional or organizational failures lead to a whole series of bureaucratic pathologies which are themselves a manifestation of the "chronic urban" condition. Changes in the way in which urban institutions allocate economic resources for social needs reflect the evolving nature of a major portion of the urban social economy.

As with community education, new forms of civic education need to be reinvented from time to time. The civic and social purposes of education need to be reformulated as urban schools experience the evolving realities of urban change. In many cases, the American city continues to be the place where things happen first.

Jane Jacobs, in both her The Death and Life of Great American Cities (1961) and The Economy of Cities (1969), has exalted the tumultuous qualities of urban life in fostering creativity. The processes of innovation and diffusion are not well understood, but both theory and experience suggest that the supply of deviance and

the demand for innovations often achieve a synergistic equilibrium in the hurly-burly of urban systems. It is unclear, however, if Jacob's model, primarily drawn from New York City in which many things have been invented ranging from brassieres to neighborhood school councils, is equally applicable to Dayton, Milwaukee, and Omaha. A city perhaps has a period of innovation and a period of diffusion, and its survival may depend upon prolonging those periods. The socioeconomic correlates of innovation in both the public and private sectors remain undetected and untested. There is, however, a growing literature on innovation and diffusion which, despite its roots in rural sociology, could be applied to an analysis of innovations in urban schools.

Associated with the processes of innovation and diffusion is the changing nature and value of centrality. The centrifugal forces manifested in suburbanization and the emergence of "spread city" have obscured the fact that new centers of centripetal attraction have appeared throughout the metropolis. The concern of the traditional civic elites with the reduced significance of the central business district has lead to a lack of attention to the social and economic processes which have sprung up around the airports, the office parks, the shopping centers, and so on - all of which represent the polycentric city. This neglect has been compounded by the work of the architect-planners who have designed urban forms with rigorously separated specialized functions, thereby making it more difficult to reestablish the creative congestion of traditional urban centers.

Urban schools in particular have become isolated from some of the more dynamic metropolitan realities. This is especially true for the urban high school which has, in many cases, been isolated from the regional labor markets.

The evolving uses of urban structural forms become, in a period of rediscovered economic scarcity, of central importance in the attempt to use "natural" centripetal forces to offset the resource-wasting forces of subsidized suburbanization. Too often a wasteful "physical fix" is sought as a response to urban social problems. From the "super suburbs" called New Towns to the "defensible space" fantasies of public housing planners, the construction of new designs has been sought as some kind of solution to social malfunctions. An alternative perspective would seek to organize and motivate social and economic behavior toward the better use and adaptation of existing structural forms. The organization of low-income tenants into public safety committees is as important to the evolving use of public housing as is the formation of development districts by private businessmen to the preservation of retail shopping areas.

With the large stock of urban schools which pre-dates World War I, school renovation for a broader range of educational and social functions becomes a critical dilemma. Simultaneously new designs for community focused schools have been developed in a number of cities. A fundamental rethinking about the functions and forms of public buildings in cities is needed.

The ten dimensions discussed above represent an effort to reformulate an understanding of urbanism in American society. These dimensions, and others could be added, reflect the current realities of urban systems. But they are manifestations of the dynamic historical forces associated with the development of cities. It is within the context of these forces that urban schools need to be reinvigorated, reorganized or reinvented.

Table 1 presents these ten dimensions in summary fashion with some reference to the analytical approach involved. Each of these dimensions reflect at least a partial interdisciplinary concern in the social sciences. Discrete bodies of literature exist. A further exposition for each of these dimensions with respect to its significance to urban education could be attempted. The important concern however with these dimensions is to use them to order or to "bound" the discussions of urbanism and the systems of urban complexity. Urban policy and urban public systems including educaton can not be adequately understood without an appreciation of how these dimensions occur within a particular urban environment.

Table 1

Analytical Dimensions of Urbanism

1. Demographic analysis
2. Market research and analysis
3. The distribution and extent of economic inequality
4. Social indicators
5. Community identification and voluntary associations
6. Racial and cultural histories
7. Inter-institutional analysis
8. Indicators of innovation and deviance
9. Central place theory and analysis
10. Urban design and renovation

Each of these dimensions reflects a different "urban science." How they might condition research in urban education will require additional conceptual analysis and integration. Their function here is more evocative than substantive.

III. DIMENSIONS OF URBAN SCHOOLS

The ten dimensions discussed above represent the external system in which the urban school is embedded. It is now necessary to suggest some of the internal dimensions of an urban educational system.

Some of these dimensions are:

(1) the issue of a language deficit or a language difference

(2) the cultural and class experiences of an urban student

(3) the instructional style and resources of the urban teacher

(4) the multiple functions of an urban principal

(5) the resources and resource linkages of the urban school

(6) the community systems associated with the urban school

(7) the inter-institutional linkages between the school system and other agencies

(8) the management and administration system of the urban district

(9) the shifting patterns of employment opportunities for urban teenagers and high school graduates

(10) the politics of economic and legal constraints.

First, the issue of language deficit or language difference has been discussed by B. Cazden in Language and Poverty (1970). The claim is that urban minority and/or poverty children have acquired less language than middle class children or they have acquired a different language. Either way this language condition inhibits the acquisition of reading skills in the early grades

and this becomes a pervasive problem in different ways in the later grades. Clifford Hill has argued (1977) that in fact urban minority students, by virtue of their greater immersion in oral culture, have what might be considered a language "excess" which inhibits their ability to process written discourse. Regardless of different theories of causality, the urban student faces the need to acquire an array of reading skills in an environment which the language scientists agree is complex.

Second, a related issue for the urban student is the instructional significance of his or her cultural or social-economic class experiences. There are those who argue that the urban classroom has not taken advantage of the rich opportunities offered by cultural pluralism. Others argue that the intense and broad range of interactions in urban communities have been neglected or misused in the development of urban education. Gordon (1975) has suggested that "the definition, the identification, the specification, and eventually the manipulation of those interactions may be the most crucial tool that man has for influencing the development of man."

The problem is compounded or the opportunity is enhanced when it is understood that different groups of urban students may bring sharply different sets of urban experiences to the instructional setting. How are these experiences to be melded into an instructionally significant program? And, how can the shifting and evolving nature of these urban interactions contribute to the socialization intent of a common curriculum?

There is an obvious relationship between the above dimension and the instructional style and resources of the urban teacher. There are several issues associated with this dimension. The cultural and class differences between teacher and student may be significant. Beyond those possible differences there may also be a mismatch between the temperamental traits of a student and the temperamental demands of instructional situations. Stella has argued that as much as fifty percent of learning problems can be attributed to such a mismatch. In any event the teaching style of the teacher must approach or achieve congruence with different and perhaps complex learning styles and abilities. Resources to achieve such an instructional fit may be acquired through (1) pre-service training, (2) on-the-job experiences and adjustments, (3) formal or systematic in-service programs, and (4) on-site diagnostic and remedial resources. Given the changing external forces impacting upon urban education, the important issues for urban schools need to be focused on an analysis of on-going staff development and in-service provisions. Recent work by Don Moore and Arthur Hyde provides a methodology for diagnosing existing staff development policies in urban schools.

A fourth dimension to urban educational system includes the multiple functions of an urban principal. Given the size and complexity of most urban districts, the role of an urban principal involves substantial independence but within a complex web of

interrelationships. Arthur Hyde, in a study of urban principals for the Center for New Schools, describes five major problem areas. In each of these problem areas the principal must either assume or delegate appropriate functions. These problem areas include:

(1) securing support for the school

(2) governing the school and sharing decision-making powers

(3) developing curriculum programs and providing effective staff development

(4) managing the school and the building

(5) mediating human relationships within and around the school and its communities.

Associated with the above dimension is the fifth dimension which is the concern with the resources and resource linkages of the urban school.

Another related dimension is the system of community inputs and involvements with the urban school. Parental support, both direct and indirect, for the instructional goals of the school is critical. But so are the levels of health, nutrition and security, etc., present within the community around the school. School-based or school-coordinated services to the community represent the thrust of some of the innovations of urban community education. The Cities-in-Schools project is another manifestation of this concern.

This latter manifestation is also reflected in the dimension which is concerned with institutional linkages between the school system and other agencies. With the growth of many new federal and state programs, the normal complexity of urban agencies serving youth and

their families is augmented by issues of intergovernmental jurisdiction, grantmanship opportunities, and regulations against the co-mingling of funds.

The eighth dimension which is a source of concern with urban education is the management and administration system of urban districts.

A related dimension is the politics of dealing with these legal and economic constraints. These constraints reflect the political workings of legislative and judicial forces at the municipal, the state and the federal levels (and sometimes the counties). Political coalitions and conflicts are fundamental to the flow of fiscal resources to urban districts. The coalitions and conflicts must be orchestrated and managed at all levels. These tasks are in some cases new skills required by educational administrators. Further issues involving desegregation, special education, collective bargaining and judicial or quasi-judicial constraints add yet more actors to the political arena of modern urban education.

The last dimension which should be used to delineate a diagnosis of urban education is the shifting patterns of employment opportunities for urban teenagers and high school graduates. What is at stake here of course is the lack of opportunities for teenage employment in the short run, and for economic opportunity and mobility in the long run.

IV. AN INITIAL SUMMARY

The basic approach which is proposed for urban educational research is based upon several assumptions. These are:

- A need to recognize the complexity of urban systems and the environment in which urban schools function.
- An initial definition of Urbanism in American Society along ten or so dimensions.
- An initial definition of at least ten dimensions which are important for an understanding of the functions and structures of urban school systems.
- A recognition of the significance of different research traditions and paradigms of inquiry and analysis.
- A need to establish priorities for urban education research in fundamental and applied areas.

Associated with these assumptions is another assumption which is that we have tended to equate urban education with the problems of low status population as defined by ethnic, minority or low socioeconomic characteristics. In the decade ahead this emphasis will remain important but we need to recognize that Ed Gordon indicated at the first national urban educational conference in Kansas City and that is the essence of must urban characteristics are now part of the experience of almost all the people in the country, thanks to modern communication and transportation. Several other methodological considerations should be cited:

- There needs to be concern with problem definition and the role of the urban practioners in such perceptions and conceptions.
- There needs to be a concern that the jargon and definitions of the various professions and disciplines not be used to impose an outside designation of a problem (The research of Howard Becker, an urban sociologist, at a medical school, is good approach to the understanding of the problems of action research).
- There needs to be a concern with appropriate organizational diagnosis in the context of the proposed interventions and innovations.

- A structure for cross-site analysis and synthesis needs to be developed for both the urban and non-urban sites. The two sets of urban dimensions proposed above might be an appropriate beginning.

- The work in sociology on social indications needs to be reviewed for its relevance for the study of urban educational systems.

Additional analysis with respect to methodologies needs to be based upon decisions with respect to research directions. The social sciences have more methodologies than they have priorities:

With respect to outcomes of new efforts in urban educational research, several areas need to be discussed.

First, there should be a concern with the identification of existing or previous successful urban practi es. Criteria for such needs to be developed. Simultaneously the context for such successes needs to be analysed.

Second, the design and implementation of new urban innovations or initiatives needs to be informed by same preliminary context diagnosis along the different dimensions. Diagnosis and design proceedings should be developed in the context of the initial planning and problem definition.

Third, insofar as this initial formulation has been informed by a socio-economic perspective, there is a fundamental concern with the allocations of resources within urban systems. Those resources obviously include money and the things which money buys in and for schools. The most important thing which is bought is time, especially professional time. The allocations of managerial time, professional time and especially staff development time are critical to understanding the patterns of urban education. To return to the medical metaphor, a healthy educational environmental might be one in which both instructional and experiential time are adequately focused on particular learning outcomes and interactions. Such patterns may require social attention and support.